

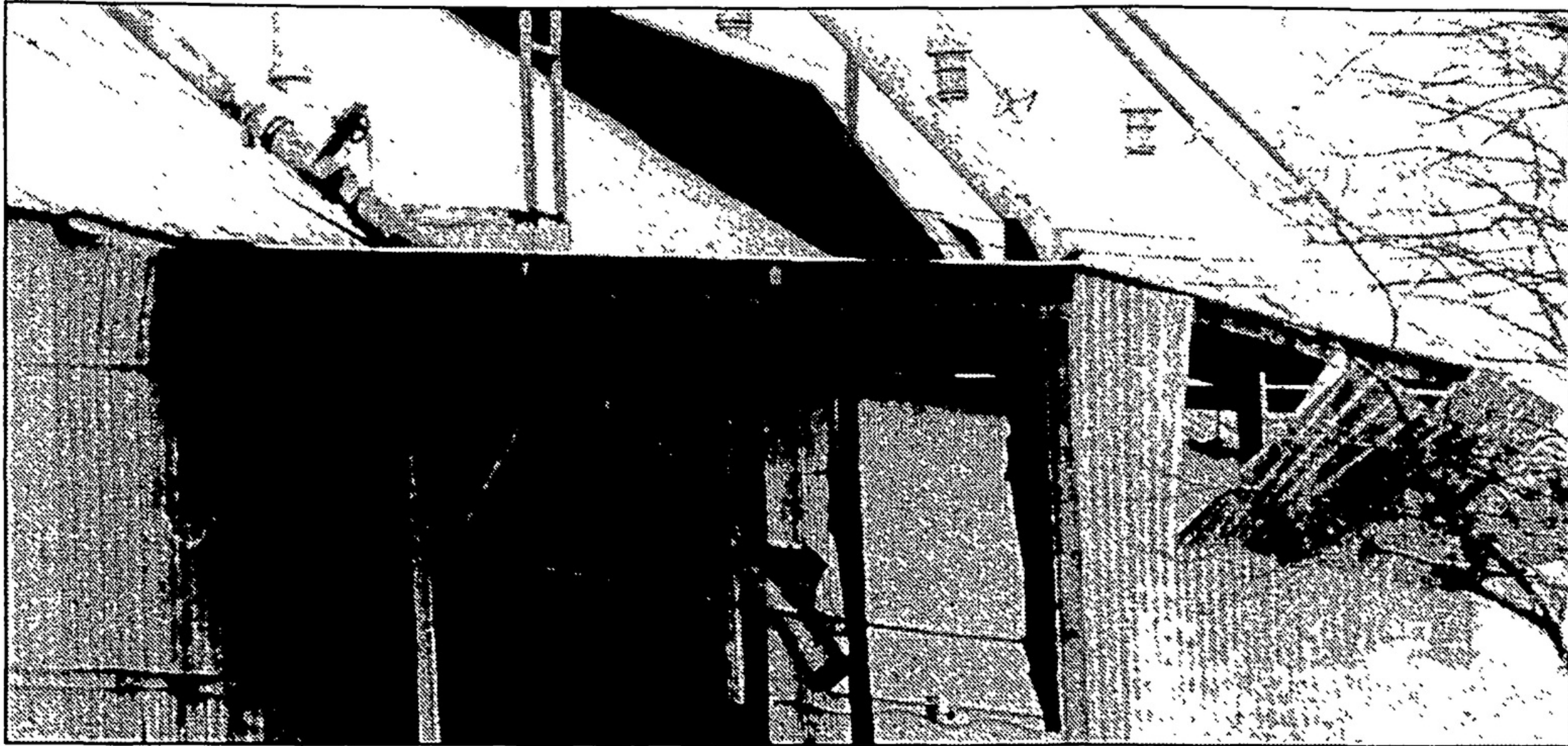


DAILY LEADER

Pontiac, Ill.

Livingston County's Home Newspaper Since 1880

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Karl Holohan/Daily Leader

The ripped metal at the top right of the Jacobson Seaway Grain Terminal in Dwight occurred late Monday morning when there was what was believed to be a grain dust explosion. The Dwight Fire Department aided by the state fire marshal's office is investigating to determine what caused the explosion. One employee sustained minor injuries and a precautionary evacuation in the vicinity was conducted. A related photo appears on page 10.

Investigation continues for cause of Dwight grain elevator explosion

By Sheila Shelton
Staff Reporter

DWIGHT — Little information was available this morning on the cause of the explosion at Jacobson Seaway Grain Terminal, at 416 E. North St., which occurred at 10:45 a.m. Monday.

The Livingston County Sheriff's office in a press release said the incident was "believed to be a grain dust explosion."

One of two employees in the elevator at the time of the explosion sustained minor injuries and was treated and later released from Morris Hospital, Morris. The injured person was Donald

Detmann, 39, of Dwight.

The Dwight Fire Department is continuing to investigate what caused the grain dust to ignite. A representative from the state fire marshal's office was in Dwight late Monday to assist with the investigation.

Sheriff's police said an approximate four block area of Dwight along Illinois 47 was evacuated until 1:15 p.m. in case a second explosion followed. Illinois 47 at Illinois 17 was also closed during the same time period. No secondary explosions occurred.

Fire departments from Pontiac, Saunemin,

Gardner, Morris and Mazon also responded to the Dwight Fire Department's call for mutual aid.

The fire from the explosion was said to have burned itself out but firemen remained on the scene to check for hot spots and prevent further explosions.

Claude Jacobson, owner of Jacobson Seaway Grain Terminal, could not be reached today by phone because the explosion caused the loss of phone service.

Dwight Police, sheriff's police and District 6 State Police secured the area surrounding the elevator while firefighters were working.

Road, bridge repairs topics of city meeting

By John Faddoul
Staff Reporter

City Council members discussed road and bridge repairs Monday night, and also approved loaning city cemetery gates for a museum exhibit in Memphis on ornamental metal work.

Council members viewed videotape of Lincoln Avenue as engineer Neil Finlen described where curb and gutters will be installed and some sections of the road widened from 19 to 24 feet when a pavement overlay is put down this year.

The improvements will help define both the roadway and entrances to businesses and residences along the road.

The curb and gutters will be installed only in areas where they are needed to improve drainage, but the two-inch layer of new paving and storm sewers will be installed the length of the street to the abandoned railroad tracks.

Bids will be let this spring, for work this year, and the project does not involve closing the street.

On two bridge rehabilitations, Finlen told the council that rehabilitation of the Vermillion Street bridge will take place most likely in 2000, so it will not be closed over next winter, and that Ladd Street bridge work will most likely occur in 2002. Finlen said the timing of the projects also involved the Reynolds-Ladd intersection project to ensure it was completed between the two bridge projects. Adding turn lanes and widening Reynolds Street at the railroad crossing will be done.

On the Ladd Street bridge rehabilitation, the council agreed Monday to the most extensive of three options for repairs, with the city paying an estimated \$115,000 of the \$760,000 total cost. The bridge will get a new deck and the 70-year-old concrete beams will be replaced with steel ones. A council committee had recommended that option. Federal funds will pay for 80 percent of the work and Livingston County and the city 10 percent each.

Other options called for repairing the deck at a total cost of \$270,000 and replacing only the deck over the existing concrete beams for an estimated \$560,000. Infrared testing in 1996

showed that 45 percent of the deck area should be repaired, and state guidelines recommend total deck replacement if more than 35 percent of the total area needs repair. The concrete beams could have lasted 20 more years, but the availability of federal funding to replace them along with the deck prompted the decision to take a longterm approach to the project.

Replacing the concrete beams with steel ones also will allow water to pass easier during flood periods.

For the Vermillion Street bridge rehabilitation, Finlen advised the council that work this year likely would have started this June and taken four to six months to complete. But to ensure that the bridge would not be closed over next winter, the rehabilitation most likely will be done in 2000, he said. On both projects, the city is cooperating with the county and its project schedulings.

Council members Monday unanimously voted to loan the traffic and pedestrian gates at the city's South Side Cemetery to the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis for an exhibit this spring.

The exhibit focuses on the work of Thomas F. Googerty (1864-1945) whose ornamental ironwork was done partly in Pontiac. The traffic gates at the cemetery are the largest known pieces of his work, Mayor Mike Ingles noted in telling the council of the museum's request.

A state blacksmith's association will remove and transport the gates, which will be restored, to the museum for the exhibit, which runs April 25 through July 3.

Ingles said the city was looking for funding sources to help with the project, and suggested the city might contribute to the restoration cost. Googerty taught ornamental ironwork at what is now the Pontiac Correctional Center, and some examples of his work remain in Pontiac.

The council last night also agreed to pay the city's share, \$2,057, to provide for a left turn signal on Illinois 116 at Morrow Street. A sensor will be embedded in the pavement that will

Please see 'Repairs' Page 10

Fire chief comments on Saturday's fuel spill

By Sheila Shelton
Staff Reporter

Pontiac Fire Chief David Lopeman commented this morning on the many safety precautions which were taken all day Saturday to protect the people of this area after a tanker truck carrying 8,250 gallons of denatured alcohol overturned on Interstate 55, just outside of Pontiac, and 100 to 150 feet south of the Vermillion River.

"This close proximity to the river was a problem that we needed to be concerned with although the median is built in such a way that it is higher near the river and it may have deterred alcohol runoff into the river," said Lopeman.

The tanker overturned after the driver of the semi-tractor pulling the tanker told police he fell asleep while driving on I-55, one mile

north of Illinois 116, at 3:18 a.m. Saturday. When the driver, Harold Gatton, 31, of Taylorville, fell asleep the truck drifted off the roadway to the left and went into the median. Once it left the roadway, the truck struck the guard rail and came to rest with the guard rail sandwiched between the tank and all of its wheels on the driver's side. The load of denatured alcohol was owned by Archer-Daniels-Midland, Decatur.

The fire chief said the denatured alcohol on Saturday was fuel-grade and was on its way to a plant in Chicago where it would be used to make ethanol.

"We were dealing with a highly flammable load and it needed to have approximately one-half the load pumped off so that the tanker could be uprighted. The lightning

of the load was mandatory in order to get the tanker up but it also caused another problem. This unloading left a vapor space with the tanker being partially full and partially empty and this increases the risk for explosion," said Lopeman.

He said it was this increased risk of explosion that led to the re-routing of traffic from I-55 to Illinois 116 and Illinois 23 to Old Route 66 and back to the interstate.

"We (the fire department) have guide books that tell us what evacuation distances should be followed on all types of materials. We followed the guidelines set forth for denatured alcohol," said the chief.

He said people living in several nearby residences were notified by the sheriff's department that it

would be well advised for the people to leave home for a few hours.

"We have to realize with I-55 that we have hazardous materials traveling through here several times each day. We, fortunately, don't have accidents involving this hazardous material on any regular basis," said Lopeman.

He said he felt that Saturday was a fine example of cooperation between agencies which worked together well in order to keep everyone safe.

"The Pontiac Fire Department, District 6 State Police, Pontiac Police, Livingston County Sheriff's Department, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the employees of Archer-Daniels-Midland Co. who

Please see 'Spill' Page 10

President orders security check

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton has ordered a formal assessment of possible damage to U.S. national security in the wake of a congressional panel's finding that American interests were harmed by China's military espionage.

"We take it very seriously and we're going to conduct a formal damage assessment," National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said Monday.

But he said the administration had not embraced the committee's

conclusion that U.S. interests were harmed.

"We're reviewing the information that was gathered," he said. "We take this issue very seriously and we are organizing an interagency team including nuclear weapons and counterintelligence experts to conduct a formal damage assessment, which will be reviewed by a panel of independent experts," Leavy said. He said the panel would report its findings to Congress.

Clinton's action came in

response to a study conducted by a special House committee investigating military and commercial deals with China. The panel, headed by Rep. Christopher Cox, R-Calif., concluded late last year that China has been pursuing U.S. military information aggressively for more than 20 years.

The panel's investigation began with an inquiry into the administration's satellite export

Please see 'Check' Page 10

Gov. Ryan signs order barring fundraising by his employees

By Dennis Conrad
Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Gov. George Ryan signed an executive order Monday barring state employees under his control from raising money for his campaign fund and promised to return all future donations from state workers.

The order marks a dramatic turnaround for Ryan, who always has defended his practice of raising campaign money from his employees. It comes after a federal investigation of the secretary of state's office linked bribe money to Ryan's campaign fund

"In order to avoid any appearance of undue influence and to promote public confidence in state government, no state employee under my control will be allowed to solicit contributions on my behalf at any time, and they are strongly encouraged not to make contributions to my campaign fund," Ryan said.

Ryan took the action on the same day that his campaign fund, Citizens for Ryan, reported that it began 1999 with \$2.3 million. The fund raised more than \$6.7 million in cash since last July and spent

Please see 'Ryan' Page 10

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

College Illinois! deadline extended

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — People are getting an extra two weeks to sign up for College Illinois!, a new state program meant to help people save for college.

The application deadline had been Jan. 31, but Gov. George Ryan extended it to Feb. 12.

"This program has experienced an overwhelmingly positive response from parents and other family members who view College Illinois! as a way to secure their children's educational futures today," Ryan said Monday. "We want to give everyone who is interested an opportunity to enroll under this year's rates."

College Illinois! gives college-bound

people the opportunity to pre-pay tomorrow's tuition at today's prices. Purchasers can buy up to nine semesters of tuition at either a community college or public university in Illinois.

For more information on how to enroll, call 1-877-877-3724 or visit the website at www.collegeillinois.com.

Federal authorities offer reward

PATOKA, Ill. (AP) — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a \$2,000 reward in the deaths of five rare trumpeter swans found mutilated near Carlyle Lake.

Unlike other swan shootings in which hunters mistook the huge white birds for snow geese, Fish and Wildlife authorities say the Jan. 24 shootings were deliberate.

Four of the birds had been decapitated, and their breasts had been cut out.

"The mutilated condition of these birds tells you that this was not the conduct of a hunter who made an honest mistake," special agent Tim Santel said.

The birds probably were mutilated to remove hands used to track the birds as part of trumpeter swan reintroduction programs in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan, Santel said.

The trumpeter swan is one of three protected species of swan found in Illinois. Killing one is a misdemeanor punishable by fines of up to \$5,000 and six months in prison.

Santel said anyone with information should call Fish and Wildlife's Springfield office at (217) 793-9554 or the state poaching hotline at (800) 236-7529.



Illinois Lottery

Monday

Pick 3-Midday: 8-3-9
Pick 3-Evening: 4-1-0
Pick 4-Midday: 9-4-9-9
Pick 4-Evening: 2-6-8-2
Little Loto 1-4-13-19-23
Estimated Loto Jackpot: \$5 million
Estimated Big Game Jackpot: \$60 million



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WEATHER

Colder High 20s	Windy Mid 40s	Precip? 30s/30
Tonight	Wednesday	Thursday

FORECAST

Clear and colder tonight. Low in the upper 20s. West winds 10 to 15 mph becoming southwest. Increasing cloudiness and windy on Wednesday. High in the middle 40s. Partly cloudy with a slight chance of rain or flurries on Thursday. High in the upper 30s. Low around 30.